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Study on the C-E Translation of Fujian Revolutionary History Museum Captions from the Perspective of Eco-translatology

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Abstract

In the post-pandemic era, Fujian province finds itself at the eastern terminus of the Maritime Silk Road and at the heart of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. This development has precipitated a marked escalation in transnational engagements across the region. It is imperative to investigate how the province's distinctive revolutionary history and cultural heritage can be more effectively incorporated as a constituent element within the framework of foreign discourse and narrated in a compelling manner to the world. This study aims to analyze the English translation strategies employed for the captions of the Fujian Revolutionary History Museum from the perspective of eco-translatology. Based on the theory, the author will conduct a multi-faceted analysis of the captions, employing a three-dimensional transformation framework that includes adaptation and selection, extending across linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions. The findings are intended to offer practical guidance for enhancing the quality of translation in similar museum captioning endeavors.

Keywords

Eco-translatology; three-dimensional transformation; museum caption

1. Introduction

Fujian province is rich in revolutionary history, boasting numerous events, resources, and pioneering figures. This has led to the emergence of numerous heroic martyrs and the development of a distinctive and precious red historical and cultural heritage in Fujian. The Fujian Revolutionary History Museum, serving as a repository for the province's revolutionary cultural assets and being the only provincial-level and largest museum dedicated to red tourism, plays a crucial role in showcasing this history. To enhance its international outreach and serve as a model for C-E translation of revolutionary historical resources in Fujian, it is essential to conduct English translation research on the museum's captions.

Eco-translatology, introduced by Hu Gengshen at the turn of the 21st century, is an innovative research framework that blends scientific and humanistic approaches to translation. Rooted in the concepts of ecological breadth, oriental ecological wisdom, and Darwinian evolutionary theory, eco-translatology broadens the theoretical landscape of translation studies. Over the past two decades, eco-translatology has rapidly evolved, establishing a unique theoretical framework, a specialized vocabulary, and a distinct philosophical stance. This study gathers the existing captions from the Fujian Revolutionary History Museum and explores the English translation strategies and

techniques employed using primary research data and eco-translatological principles. It investigates the processes of adaptation and selection across linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions, providing actionable insights. The objective is to illuminate the translation of captions at revolutionary historical tourism sites, promoting the international dissemination of China's narratives.

2. Analysis of C-E Translation of Fujian Revolutionary History Museum Captions Based on the Eco-translatology

2.1 Adaptation and Selection from the Linguistic Dimension

The dimensional adaptability selection in language refers to "the translator's adaptive selection of linguistic forms in the translation process" (Hu, 2008). When translating, translators need to carefully study the source text, understand the meanings of words, linguistic features, textual structure, translation purpose, and the linguistic context in which the text is used. They should carry out adaptive selection and transformation of the source text from different aspects and levels, "transplanting" the source text into the target language so that the target text can convey the linguistic information of the source language and adapt to the ecological environment of the target language (Xue, 2022).

2.1.1 Data-based Analysis

By taking pictures of the museum captions and tapping them into the computer in the early stage, the paper has compiled a parallel Chinese-English corpus of the Fujian Revolutionary History Museum, and with the help of the corpus, which is labeled to a certain extent, easy to retrieve, and can be applied to descriptive and empirical research (Wang, 2012), the paper examines the linguistic characteristics of the museum captions of Fujian Revolutionary History Museum and the translation strategy from the vocabulary dimension.

The author used software AntConc (version 4.2.4) to analyze the data of bilingual types and tokens in the corpus, and calculated the TTR value of the two with Excel. The specific data are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The Chinese-English TTR Statistical Tables

Item	Chinese captions	English captions
Type	3067	3548
Token	1061	976
TTR	0.35	0.28

The data in Table 1 show that there are differences in lexical features between Chinese narratives and English translations. The TTR is higher in Chinese narratives than in English translations, which indicates that the latter uses less vocabulary than the former, in line with the feature of the English language that it focuses more on the characteristics of simplicity, evocativeness, and prominence of the information.

Additionally, the study conducted an analysis of word frequency within the captions. The authors used AntConc to obtain the top 16 high-frequency words in English translations, as shown below.

Table 2. Ranking of High-Frequency Words in English Translations (Top 16)

Type	the	and	of	in	Fu-jian	to	war	a	peo-ple	for	re-sistance	rev-olu-tion	army	CPC	agai nst	party
Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	13	15	16
Freq	402	204	197	122	94	59	50	46	40	38	35	33	30	30	25	24

As can be seen from Table 2, excluding the article "the", the conjunction "and" tops the list in word frequency, reaching 204 times, which makes the whole text more coherent and fluent. When it comes to the same concept, such

as “war”, “resistance”, “army”, etc., there is often a repetition of words, and the English language most avoids piling up, repetition, and cumbersomeness, so when doing the English translation, the translator has to screen and reorganize the Chinese information appropriately (Li, 2012).

Given the significance of syntactic features in assessing the linguistic characteristics of the translated text, the author further explores this aspect by examining overall syntactic features, among others. The research focuses on calculating the average sentence length as a measure of analysis, employing the software AntConc and Excel functions to tabulate this metric. The formula for reference is: average sentence length = total number of morphemes/total number of sentences. The final results are shown in the table below.

Table 3. Average sentence length statistics

Item	Chinese captions	English translations
Tokens	3067	3548
Sentences	99	112
Average sentence length	31	31.7

As shown in Table 3, although there are some differences in the number of file tokens in the Chinese-English bilingual captions of the Fujian Revolutionary History Museum, the average sentence lengths between the two are relatively close to each other, which suggests that the English content of the captions may be deficient in adaptation and selection, and that there is a preference for explaining the Chinese content by means of the literal translation.

2.1.2 Case-based Analysis

(a) Refer to ST1 in the Appendix
Translation: In this red land, heroes sparked people’s hope with their outstanding efforts, and martyrs erected a monument shining forever with their lives.

Chinese emphasizes the parataxis and often adopts the streamlined method for recording the facts, and readers often need to rely on context and premonition to comprehend the whole text. English mainly adopts the hypotaxis, often using various forms of conjunctions, and the grammatical logic is obvious, so it is more rigorous (Lian, 2011). The above passage is a typical example of Chinese language features, with gorgeous writing, and at the same time, it enhances the persuasive power of the text through the use of four verbs in a row and the simile, so as to achieve the effect of stirring up emotions and building up momentum. If all the words are translated as they are, it will be too much for foreign tourists to read, and the translation will not be in line with the syntactic structure of English, which seems to be loose and lengthy. Therefore, the translator should fully consider the acceptance psychology and expectation of the readers of the translated language, pay attention to the principle of clarifying the difference between inside and outside and choosing the most favorable, make reasonable logical adjustments to the information in the original text, take such ways as changing the order, rewriting or deleting, consciously downplaying the literary style and highlighting the substantive content, and find the best fit in the aesthetic interest of both sides, so as to make the translated text concise and sophisticated, and more inspirational.

(b) Refer to ST2 in the Appendix
Translation: ... sparking a tiny fire for “establishment of a separate regime through worker-peasant armed struggle”.

If the original “Xing Xing Zhi Huo” is directly translated as a tiny fire, readers may not be able to clarify its connotation. In order to ensure that the information in the source language is accurately conveyed and no biased understanding will arise, the most valuable and appropriate vocabulary is selected to meet the ecological context of the original language, and the abstract noun “Xing Xing Zhi Huo” of the bias-orthogonal structure can be visualized as the hopeful beginning to show the hard-won new situation of the revolution, which is conducive to the elimination of the cultural loss brought about by linguistic differences, and to make the translated language consistent with the source language, so that the translation can produce the same meaning as the source language.

2.2 Adaptation and Selection from the Cultural Dimension

Competent translation mediates cultural convergence/divergence through semantic precision and historical-cultural-

ideological parameter integration, enabling target audiences to reconstruct China's sociocultural context via culturally embedded translations (Liu & Sun, 2023). The process of English translation of the captions of Fujian Revolutionary History Museum is by no means a simple linguistic transformation of the text. The translator should fully observe the audience of the translated language, try to decode the humanistic and historical information in the source language, and adopt translation strategies such as paraphrasing, interpreting, and annotating respectively, so as to not only retain the original flavor of the source language's cultural ecology but also not to clash with the translation language's cultural ecology and to maximize the understanding of foreign audiences of Chinese culture, values and spiritual connotations of red culture and realize cultural identity.

(c) Refer to ST3 in the Appendix
Translation: ... pass through various difficult situations.

In Chinese culture, there is an aesthetic preference for four-character words. They serve as a critical mechanism for conveying affective dimensions and articulating thematic concerns in the texts (Wang & Cai, 2025), but it's difficult for the English audiences, who focuses more on the conciseness and clarity of information, to catch the meaning of such phrases. If the Chinese idioms are translated correspondingly, sometimes it will be redundant and reduce the logic of the sentences. In addition, the phrases "Qian Shan Wang Shui" and "Qian Nan Wan Xian" contain cultural concepts that people in the English-speaking world lack, so translating the phrases word for word will not enhance the readers' understanding of the content of the captions, but rather, it will easily create a cultural comprehension barrier. Therefore, we can use "various difficult situations" to summarize the phrases "Qian Shan Wang Shui" and "Qian Nan Wan Xian" to adapt to the ecological environment of the English language linguistically and culturally.

2.3 Adaptation and Selection from the Communicative Dimension

The communicative dimension of translation requires that translators, through contextual analysis and intent reconstruction, establish semiotic equivalence between source and target languages, thereby enabling culturally embedded understanding among target readers comparable to source-text reception while maintaining authorial communicative intent (Chen, 2025). The purpose of the revolutionary history museum captions translation is to express and convey the speaker's thoughts in a way that the target audience understands and is happy to accept, so as to ensure the maximum generality and generalization of the discourse system, and thus to obtain authentic and effective communication.

(d) Refer to ST4 in the Appendix
Translation: ... the new red regime and its soviet governments of all levels were based on during bloody battles;

The original "Yu Xue Fen Zhan" is, in fact, essentially describing the quality of the fearless struggle of the military and civilians. Chinese prefer to use the four-character words to highlight, and thus, the expression effect is graphic and vivid. While English focuses on the transmission of substantive information, if the translation of the mechanical word-by-word counterparts, the foreign tourists can not help but feel a flashy, disgusting feeling. In addition, "Yu Xue Fen Zhan" has no similar expression in the translated language, that is, semantic vacancy. Therefore, it may be worth transforming the image of the original text, deleting and simplifying its structure, and creatively summarizing it as "the result of fearless struggle" to ensure that the translation is concise and readable, conveys the main message, and caters to the aesthetic psychology of the Western audience to achieve the communicative purpose. At the same time, it should be noted that in the original sentence, the temporal adverbial clause "during bloody battles" cannot form a prepositional structure with "on", which is a grammatical error in translation and also violates the requirements of linguistic adaptation and choice.

3. Conclusion

Utilizing the theoretical framework of eco-translatology, this study conducts a comprehensive analysis, both data-based and case-based, of the English translations found in the captions of the Fujian Revolutionary History Museum. It investigates the strategies that translators can employ to make necessary adaptations during the translation of red tourism narratives, considering linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions. The aim is to ensure that these historical stories are effectively communicated in a foreign language and that the spirits embodied in the

revolutionary historical events continue to be passed down.

From the perspective of multidimensional integration, translation entails transformations at the levels of language, culture, and communicative thinking (Li, Li, & Yang, 2025). It is worth noting that during translation practice, the three dimensions are interwoven and interrelated, rather than mutually exclusive, although they may receive different levels of emphasis. The ultimate aim is to cater to the diverse aspects of the translation ecosystem, producing the most adaptive translations of red tourism captions and fostering a deeper and more tangible engagement with Chinese red culture. By embracing the tripartite transformation of eco-translatology, translators should prioritize adhering to the expressive norms of the target language while also considering the cultural understanding of the target audience and the communicative aims. This approach aims to construct a stronger bridge between Chinese and Western cultures, convey authentic and comprehensive narratives of the revolutionary history narrative to the international community, and amplify China's voice on the global stage.

Lastly, it is important to recognize that translation encompasses more than just the conversion of language; it is a form of cross-cultural interaction. Throughout the translation process, it is essential to honor and comprehend the cultural context of the source material while also considering the target audience's level of acceptance. By doing so, we can effectively facilitate the export and propagation of culture, thereby enhancing the international standing of Chinese cultural contributions.

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Appendix (Source texts in this paper)

ST1: 这里点燃了风云岁月的明灯；飞扬着苏区英雄儿女的风采；渗透着革命先烈殷红的鲜血；树立着永放光芒的丰碑。
ST2: ... 点燃了“工农武装割据”的“Xing Xing Zhi Huo”。
ST3: ... 跨越千山万水，克服千难万险。
ST4: ... 是无数革命先烈、红军将士、人民大众浴血奋战的结果。